

years have seen the sadness and heart-wrenching agony caused by three major attacks on rail systems in Madrid, London and disturbingly yesterday in India. These three attacks alone have led to some astonishing numbers, 22 bomb blasts, 15 trains destroyed, 390 people dead and over 1,650 injuries and countless lives forever altered. The shock, horror and loss of life resulting from these acts of terrorism are reminders that the United States must do more to strengthen rail security.

Our passenger rail systems are vulnerable potential targets for terrorists. The 9/11 Commission's final report noted that "surface transportation systems such as railroads and mass transit remain hard to protect because they are so accessible and extensive." Throughout the country, there are over 300,000 miles of freight rail lines and over 10,000 miles of commuter and urban rail system lines. On a typical weekday, 11.3 million passengers use rail or mass transit, and at any given time, hazardous materials are transported throughout the country.

Yet we still do not have a comprehensive national strategy for rail security. The Transportation Security Administration has not yet implemented adequate security guidelines for rail and mass transit systems similar to those required for airports. The Department of Homeland Security does not even require rail and mass transit systems to complete vulnerability assessments or submit security plans to the Department. Nor are we providing adequate funding for rail security. Over the past four years, the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration have spent on average \$9 per air passenger, as compared to only one penny for each rail or mass transit passenger. One penny to prevent bombs, chemical and biological agents does not go far enough for tools, prevention and training.

It is clear that many of our rail and mass transit employees lack adequate security training. In a 2005 survey of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, 84 percent of those surveyed said they had not received "any training" or "additional training" related to terrorism prevention and response in the previous twelve months. We in Congress must have a frank discussion about our rail system, from AMTRAK, to the Metro in DC, the L in Chicago and the T in Boston and of course the subway in New York City. It is time for the U.S. to implement a coordinated national strategy for rail security, to provide adequate security training for rail and mass transit employees, and to fully fund rail security programs.

I commend my colleagues for introducing the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act. The reforms in this bill are long overdue. We have seen over and over again the pain these terrorist acts have brought to ordinary citizens. We cannot afford to wait until tragedy strikes again to improve this country's rail security.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OBERSTAR addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act was our greatest accomplishment in the long struggle against discrimination and oppression. It has changed the face of this Nation and enabled millions of Americans the opportunity to vote.

During the 1960s, we saw many brave men and women rise up against the oppression of Jim Crow and demand an equal voice in our democracy. In this battle for the most basic of rights, many heroic Americans were beaten and imprisoned, saw their churches burned or bombed, or were killed in the name of freedom and justice. I am proud to serve alongside Congressman JOHN LEWIS, whose bravery and presence during that historic march in Selma changed this Nation.

There are many young people who may not know of this battle towards equality. It is imperative we recognize and celebrate our great accomplishments as a nation. We cannot develop future policies or laws without applying the lessons we have learned from the past.

This August will mark the 41st anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. There are many who say there is no longer a need for the Voting Rights Act. Unfortunately, this is not the case. It is true that we have made remarkable progress since 1965, however, there is still much work to be done.

Minorities continue to face an uphill battle of misinformation over polling locations, the purging of voter rolls, scare tactics, and inaccessible voting locations. Prior to the 2004 elections, students at Prairie View A&M were told they could no longer register to vote in Waller County, Texas. The fear was that the eight thousand students at this Historically Black College would elect someone the local District Attorney didn't want.

The Voting Rights Act helped protect these students from becoming disenfranchised voters. This change in voter registration was not pre-cleared by the Department of Justice, as required by Section 5. Ultimately, the Texas Attorney General and the Department of Justice intervened and provided these students with the access and opportunity to vote. This is just one example of why we still need Section 5 and the Voting Rights Act.

Section 5 is current, necessary and protects the rights of millions of Americans. The reality is that there are still some people out there who don't want minorities to vote.

As part of the backlash against illegal immigration, there have been calls to eliminate bilingual voting assistance. I feel that Americans should be able to speak English; however, I do not endorse testing language abilities as a prerequisite to vote. Those who receive bilingual voting assistance are American citizens. They weren't required to pass a language test to pay taxes or serve in the military, so they shouldn't have to prove their language skills in order to vote.

The Voting Rights Act was not and never will be about special rights—it is about equal

rights. Our democracy and our values as Americans are contingent upon the idea that every person should have the right to vote and have that vote counted.

We have made amazing progress since the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, but progress does not mean that we stop trying. Now is the time to reauthorize this historic cornerstone of civil rights. It is imperative to our rights, our freedom and our democracy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ENGEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SUPPORTING SERGEANT FIRST CLASS TREVOR J. DIESING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Sergeant First Class Trevor J. Diesing of Plum City, WI. Trevor rose to the call to serve his country in her time of need, and gave the ultimate sacrifice in her defense. He was killed in Iraq when an improvised explosive device detonated near his position. Today, I bear witness that Trevor's efforts and the efforts of all our service men and women will forever be remembered. This Friday at the courthouse in Prescott, Wisconsin a plaque will be dedicated in Trevor's memory.

Trevor is a true national hero. Born to Debbie and Lonnie Diesing in Plum City, WI, Trevor felt a call early in life to serve his country and to help make the world a better place. After marrying his wife Lori and raising three beautiful children, Trevor's passion to defend what he loved was only strengthened. Friends and family described him as someone you always wanted on your side—a hard working and caring person who was always willing to lend a hand. When we step back and realize the incredible service of our men and women in uniform, we must always remember Trevor, for he was one of our finest.

The presence of men and women from Wisconsin serving in Iraq is a great blessing to our country as a whole. They all are doing a terrific job under very difficult and dangerous circumstances. We will be forever grateful for the sacrifice made by Sergeant First Class Trevor J. Diesing. Trevor was in essence a true patriot, serving his country selflessly while giving to the Iraqi people the greatest gift of all, their freedom. He also gave the children of America a great hope, the chance to grow up in a world that is a little more safe.

As a husband, father, son, and friend, Trevor will live on in our hearts as a hero and his legacy will never be forgotten. I pledge to do all that I can to ensure that Trevor's life was not lost in vain.

Perhaps President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said it best: "He stands in the unbroken line of patriots who have dared to die, that freedom might live, and grow, and increase its blessings. Freedom lives, and through it, he lives—in a way that humbles the undertakings of most men."

May God bless Trevor, and take him into his care. And may God's special blessing bring comfort to Trevor's family and friends always.